

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 AF-08 ARA-06 EA-07 EUR-12 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 COME-00 EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5390

INFO NAC COLLECTIVE 03

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2823

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: COLOMBO ON THE EVE OF THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT

1. NEW PAIN GLEAMS FROM THE CRUMBLING FACADES ALONG THE PARADE ROUTE. THE AIRPORT ROAD, FORMERLY A POTHOLE-RIDDEN BACK ALLEY, IS NOW A WIDE, SMOOTH MODERN ROAD. NEW SIDEWALKS ARE IN PLACE AND A NEW INDUSTRY HAS SPRUNG UP IN THE PAINTING OF CENTER LIES DOWN THE NON-ALIGNED ROADS, AND THE BLACK AND WHITE ZEBRA MARKINGS ON THE NEWLY INSTALLED AND S ALSO NON-ALIGNED CURBS. DETRACTORS SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE. BUT THE CEYLONESE, ON THE EVE OF THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT, HAVE EVERYTHING PRETTY WELL SPRUCED UP AS LONG AS ONE DOESN'T WANDER VERY FAR FROM THE DESIGNATED ROUTES.

2. RUMORS OF ALL VARIETIES ARE FLYING AROUND COLOMBO PROVIDING ITS INHABITANTS WITH FUEL FOR THEIR FAVORITE PASTIME--INDULGING IN GOSSIP, PREFERABLE MALICIOUS. WHO IS COMING AND WHERE THEY ARE STAYING ARE BURNING ISSUES. WHO IS COMING AND WHERE THEY ARE STAYING ARE BURNING ISSES. TALES THAT THERE WILL BE FOOD SHORTAGES, THAT PRICES OF ESSENTIALS WILL SKYROCKET OR THAT PEOPLE WILL BE UNABLE TO GET TO WORK ARE ALL STAUNCHLY DENIED BY THE GOVERNMENT. CONFIDENTIAL

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3. RUMORS THAT OPPOSITION LABOR LEADERS MAY TRY TO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT BY CALLING STRIKES CERTAINLY HAVE SOME SUBSTANCE. A POST AND TELEGRAPHIC OFFICERS STRIKE HAS AFFECTED MAIL AND OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS

SERVICE ON THE EVE OF THE CONFERENCE. (IRONICALLY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE STRIKING UNION ASKED THE EMBASSY TO SEND A TELEGRAM FOR THEM TO THEIR INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATE IN GENEVA AS HE WAS HAVING TROUBLE GETTING IT SENT BECAUSE OF HIS STRIKE.) OFFICIALS ARE ALSO WORRIED THAT EXTREMISTS IN THE TAMIL MINORITY COMMUNITY MAY TRY SOME ATTENTION-GETTING INCIDENTS WHICH COULD ALSO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT SUCH AS EARLY THIS WEEK, THE SHOOTING AND LIGHT WOUNDING OF A GOVERNMENT- SUPPORTING TAMIL POLITICIAN IN JAFFNA. HOWEVER, MRS. BANDARANAIKE'S GOVERNMENT WILL REACT TO ANY SUCH CHALLENGES FIRMLY AND FORCEFULLY AND HAS MADE IT KNOW THAT NAY STRIKES AGAINST THIS SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT AT THIS TIME ARE "IMMORAL."

4. OFFICIAL INVOLVED IN CONFERENCE PREPARATIONS ARE WORN TO A FRAZZLE. LONG HOURS SPENT IN TRYING TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE INEVITABLE BUGS IN THE ARRANGEMENTS SAPPING THEIR ENERGIES EVEN BEFORE THE CONFERENCE BEGINS. PRACTICE MOTORCADES FLIT FROM AIRPORT TO HOTEL TO CONFERENCE HALL. BLOCKING ROADS FOR HOURS AT A TIME. THE BUREAUCRATIC EXHAUSTION IS MATCHED ON THE STAFFS OF THE USUALLY MINISCULE EMBASSIES OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES WHO ARE OVERWHELMED BY DEMANDS IMPOSED BY A HIGH-LEVEL VISIT. NO ONE, WE HEAR, IS SATISFIED WITH HIS ACCOMMODATIONS AND EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT REPORTEDLY SWITCHED FROM THE INTERCONTINENTAL TO THE OBEROI HOTEL BECAUSE HIS SUITE AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL WAS NOT AS GRAND AS THE ONE GIVEN TO YUGOSLAVIA'S PRESIDENT TITO. DELEGATIONS WILL BE SPLIT UP ALL OVER TOWN AND A MEETING OF AN ENTIRE DELEGATION MAY REQUIRE A MAJOR LOGISTICAL EFFORT.

5. A MORE ANNOYING MANIFESTATION OF THE APPROACHING SUMMIT IS THE SHARP INCREASE IN PLACEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS OF ARTICLES SUPPLIED BY THE "NON-ALIGNED" NEWS AGENCIES -- INDIA'S SAMACHAR, YUGOSLAVIA'S TANJUG AND CUBA'S PRENSA LATINA -- AND CONFIDENTIAL

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TASS. THIS DEVELOPMENT APPARENTLY MARKS THE DAWN OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION ORDER AND HAS TURNED THE ONCE-PROUD "CEYLON DAILY NEWS" INTO A DRAB PROPAGANDS SHEET WITH SLANTED ARTICLES ON THE SINS OF THE CHILEAN REGIME AND THE PLIGHT OF BLACKS IN THE UNITED STATES VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE.

6. DESPITE THE FRUSTRATIONS AND SEEMINGLY ENDLESS PROBLEMS, THE STAGE IS SET. THE NEARLY-NEW CONFERENCE HALL HAS BEEN NEWLY REFURBISHED BY THE CHINESE, THE YUGOSLAV'S TELEVISION TRANSMISSION SET-UP IS IN PLACE WITH 92 YUGOSLAV TECHNICIANS TO MAN IT, THE NEW VIP LOUNGE AT THE AIRPORT IS JUST ABOUT COMPLETED, AND THE SECURITY SERVICES ARE NEWLY OUTFITTED IN THEIR INDIAN-DONATED CLOTH. ALL THAT'S NEEDED NOW IS THE STARS OF THE

SHOW -- TITO, CASTRO, SADAT AND MRS. GANDHI.
REED

CONFIDENTIAL

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